

# **BERKSHIRE ART MUSEUM**

Barbara and Eric Rudd Art Foundation

## **2019 Exhibitions**

### **Not Just Another Pretty Picture**

#### **Death of a Loved One - 1890s Fashion**

#### **Dark Matter**





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## Berkshire Art Museum's 2019 Exhibitions:

### Not Just Another Pretty Picture

#### Death of a Loved One - 1890s Fashion:

#### Dark Matter

While viewers can be moved by good art that has color and beauty, this exhibition examines good art that minimizes those features. This exhibition might not be for everyone who walks through our doors.

Exhibitions that I have curated often come about from my personal experiences. When I was first developing my own art, I often used a lot of black paint and then would hear from family and friends upon seeing my latest creation, “it’s not very pretty.” My standard answer was “good art need not be pretty,” or “sidewalk cracks can be as interesting as sunsets.” In most cases, my reply was a hard sell.

Often, gallery patrons look to buy art to hang above a living room couch in order to liven up the room’s decor. Any gallery dealer will confirm that colorful paintings sell better than dark paintings. In the early 1970s, I was having a show and my gallery dealer wanted to hang two colorful paintings in the rear gallery room, while I wanted a somber black painting that I knew was more powerful; I thought the room would take on a Zen-like tranquility. I won the argument, but she was right – the black painting didn’t sell (although eventually, to my satisfaction, it ended up in a museum collection). My art has struggled with this notion for a long time - I make art to

express something that might not be pleasing to the eye. But I am not alone; there is a history to this. Fortunately, museums are not trying to sell the art on exhibition.

Art, mostly representational art, has often presented horrific scenes. The church was the largest patron of western art, and the most obvious example is the thousands of crucifixes that have been painted and sculpted over the centuries. One is expected to be moved by this scene, not to smile. Similarly, battle victories have been commissioned, and while there is much blood and gore in these war scenes, it also takes on the same excitement as a modern-era action movie, where the hero saves something or someone in the wake of scores of mutilated bodies.

While religion and war have been the most dominant themes to show pain, there are many other bloody subjects that have been depicted in art for centuries - from sexual encounters to medical postmortems to still lifes of hanging and butchered rabbits. Modern day artists have continued this tradition; they are not immune to experiencing war and pain. For older living artists, the Vietnam War became harsh subject matter to deal with. Today, Iraq/the Mid-East, terrorism and sexual assault are predominant issues.

Although abstract art can evoke painful

associations, the bulk of what we think about in these terms - mostly human suffering - continue to be expressed in representation art. From the Manet and Goya execution paintings to Picasso's famous Guernica painting, an argument can be made that while there is beauty in seeing great art, there is also an uneasiness looking at, or being reminded of, the subject. It is also true that time changes one's view. In its day, viewers were aghast to see Picasso's figures and faces; today, they are classical abstractions.

Many times, artists want to include shock value in their art; they are almost asking for a negative viewer reaction. Shock for its own sake does not make good art; there must be more. If the art is good, then the shock value becomes an added experience.

Contemporary abstract art can cause this reaction as well. Brushes with paint can seem like weapons, angrily attacking the canvas. De Kooning's use of brushstrokes added to his violent figures, while Basquiat continued that tradition. Even non-objective art can present forceful emotions.

Sometimes the title can make a difference as to how we react to an artwork. If a work portrayed a couple making love, the viewer would have one reaction; having a title of "Sexual Assault" would give the viewer an entirely different reaction. In another example, Serrano's famous manipulated photograph titled "Pissed Christ" made headlines as millions were insulted by the combination presented, pointed out by its title. Of course, what added fuel to the fire was the link to a government grant that the artist received. The "piss" was certainly just an abstract component, but it changed the artwork.

I had a similar reaction in my own studio not long

ago. I completed a very large relief painting and when I applied the title "Cancer" to it, the red shapes seemed to take on a more energized battle, as if beating and taking over the healthy cells of one's body. The artwork became more disturbing than if I had not assigned that title to it. It was completely abstract, but still, that title gave it a very powerful representational association.

I have had another personal connection to "tough art." Our museum annex displays more than 150 life-sized figures, many in disturbing positions. In the adjoining room of the repurposed former church, there is an installation that obviously represents suffering. After all, religion has been associated with war and death throughout its history, where one party wants to kill another party simply because of having different beliefs. Because I dedicated the annex installation to the 9/11 victims, viewers who visited around that time period would leave in tears, thinking about the 3,000 deaths from that tragic incident. In actuality, the art was installed six months before that event happened; the association with 9/11 was coincidental. The installation could have represented the holocaust or any number of religious-death events; 9/11 was simply the closest to us both chronologically and geographically.

These are personal experiences with art that is "not pretty." As I indicated, historically, there are an unlimited number of examples. I like to see great art; I do not care if that art is pleasing or will beautify a room. I want to be moved and I want to be taken in by what I am seeing.

With all this in mind, it seemed natural to try to separate art that is – at first glance - not pretty, from what might be more pleasing to the eye. Some artists came across my radar that seemed to fit the bill. James Allen happened to do tortured figures, certainly not the figures you

might expect. Dan Wolf similarly does tortured portraits portraying a darker side to his people and situations. Kevin Bubriski photographs the aftershock from the Nepal 2015 earthquakes. Firoz Mahmud reminds us of collateral damage from historical wars. Sandra Moore takes on the mysterious assassination of Khashoggi. Likewise, Saira Wasim artworks have that toughness and sexual tension that might, at first, repel someone from looking, but taking more time, might just do the opposite – bring the viewer in - as good art should.

Last summer we had an exciting installation from Greg Lafave's extensive collection of fashion. Clothing can be fun, and we showed Edwardian era fashion- elegant clothing that might be worn to a cocktail party in the early part of the century. But clothing has other associations – both as uniforms and as representations from more somber moments. This season, we present

grieving fashion, "Death of a Loved One"- 1890s Fashion: Collection of Greg Lafave," in association with the main exhibition.

The Berkshire Art Museum has a group of advisory board members, many who are also artists. I asked for some smaller pieces that might fit this gloomier narrative in a show called, "Dark Matter." In our Tower Gallery, we present works by Keith Bona, Arthur De Bow, Robert Henriquez, Maria Siskind, Sarah Sutro, and David Zaig. This is the sixth season of the Berkshire Art Museum. Please thank our donors for their generosity and our advisory board members for all their hard work. Tell your friends to visit and do come back to explore all 25,000 square feet of the museum's galleries in two re-purposed buildings.

Eric Rudd  
Founding Director

## James Allen

*I have always been drawn to social and humanistic issues, and this is reflected in my cut-out paintings more than in any other series I have undertaken. The images often convey a sense of tension and distress, but this is not as unrelentingly dark as it may, at first, seem. One may also discern the courage and dignity with which humankind confronts the various challenges that have been with us, in one form or another, since the beginning of our tenure on the planet. Sometimes the conflict addressed is large and potentially tragic, as with war in Nuns and Guns (an allegory of the inherent conflict within us between voices calling for the acts of mercy and voices that demand aggressive defense of the clan and its values.) The Totentanx (Dance of Death) in this exhibition is a segment from the series I Am Poor, I Am Hungry. Elsewhere the struggle may be more about personhood, self-dignity, and liberation from exploitation as in Me Too.*

*With the use of cut-out figures I seek a balance between achieving a striking human presence and a painterly surface rich in expressive formal invention, one that conveys*

*a sense of transience and mutability, even vulnerability, and provides an edginess that may suggest the impossibility of fully understanding the situation of my subjects. To that end certain passages may be almost naturalistically rendered, while other elements are much more freely interpreted in form, color and texture. The work always begins with an imaginative impulse, often facilitated by a probing, searching drawing process. The final expression of a concept is only resolved in the excitement of the actual painting process, where risk-taking and accident add vitality and nuance to the idea.*

*The images do not replicate reality. They are an emotional and intellectual response to selected reality. I hope that they can be gateways for others to experience and examine their own response to the issues invoked.*

James Allen has his home and studio in Williamstown, MA. You may view more of his work at [jallenart.com](http://jallenart.com).



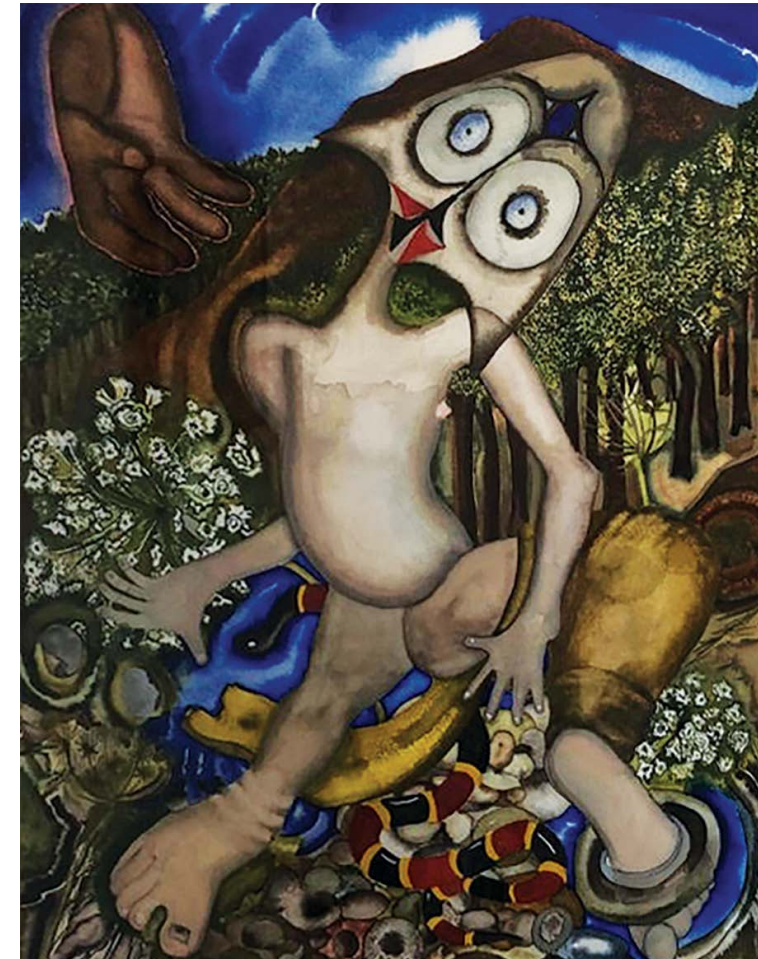
## Sandra Moore

Sandra Moore worked as an artist/ filmmaker 1977-1990, then as a physician. She returned to drawing and painting in 2015.

Most recent subjects include a meditation on the treatment of subjugated peoples by whites (“This Happened”), and an exploration of Jamal Khashoggi’s death at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul -- including our government’s official response. She did not want the news of Khashoggi’s death to evaporate off, as another

news subject flipping by. We know Khashoggi’s torture was documented by audio recording, but no images have been documented. By repetitively painting the consulate room and the murder from grisly details revealed in the press, she tried to allow this event to take on a visual gravity, possibly helping us to share our outrage and grief.

Moore lives in upstate NY. Her work can be seen on her website, [sandymooreartist.com](http://sandymooreartist.com)





## Kevin Bubriski

Kevin Bubriski has been photographing Nepal for forty years since arriving there as a Peace Corps village water systems volunteer from 1975 to 1978.

Bubriski's fine art photographs are in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Kevin was recipient of Guggenheim, Fulbright and NEA fellowships. In 1993 he published the book, *Portrait of Nepal*, a collection of view camera portraits he made throughout Nepal over the

1980s. In conjunction with receiving the Peabody Museum Robert Gardner Visiting Fellowship in 2010, Bubriski's large retrospective monograph *Nepal 1975-2011* was published by Radius Books of Santa Fe, NM and the Peabody Museum Press of Harvard University in 2014. His book *Look into My Eyes: Nuevomexicanos por Vida 81-83* was published in March 2016 with the Museum of New Mexico Press. In 2018 he co-authored with Sienna Craig the book *Mustang in Black and White* with Vajra Books in Kathmandu and in 2019 the book *Legacy in Stone: Syria Before War* with Powerhouse Books in New York.



## Firoz Mahmud

Being born in Bangladesh, artist Firoz Mahmud lives and works between Tokyo and New York. He has been prominent artist from Bangladesh for his large scale artworks, long running and ongoing art series and art projects for last few years. Firoz Mahmud was a fellow researcher artist at Rijksakademie VB Kunsten, Amsterdam,

and has a PhD from the Tokyo University of Arts, 2nd MFA from Tama Art University and a MFA and BFA from Dhaka University. Mahmud has exhibited at the Office of Contemporary Art (OCA), Norway, MAXXI Museum of 21st Century Arts Rome, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan Contemporary Art at Asia House London, Hiroshima Museum of Contemporary Art, University Art Museum, Metropolitan Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo & Geidai PS1, Fuchu Art Museum, Mori Art Museum (CG) Tokyo; Metropolitan Mostings Hus Copenhagen, Sovereign Art Foundation HK, Children Museum and Hammond Museum in New York, Ota Fine Arts, Exhibit320 in Delhi, Dhaka Art Center, National Museum and Bengal Gallery in Dhaka.

Firoz's work has been exhibited at the following biennales 1st Bangkok Art Biennale, Lahore Biennial, Dhaka Art Summit, Setouchi Triennial (BDP), Aichi Triennial, Sharjah Biennale, Cairo Biennale, Echigo-Tsumari Triennial and Asian Biennale. His upcoming shows are at Asia Art Initiative (AAI), Philadelphia, Sharjah Art



Foundation, UAE, Congo Biennale, Kinshasa, Congo. Firoz is represented by Ota Fine Arts in Tokyo, Singapore, Shanghai and Exhibit 320 in New Delhi.

His artistic practice is realized through various mediums such as painting, drawing, installation and drawing photography that engage with his cultural and political heritage. Among his large scale and extensive art projects are on exploration of the 21st century socio-political issues, war and conflict and legacies of Bengal region, cherish dream of immigrant and emerging families in new land, city or country, Layapa Art-painting project series on native legacy and history, His 26-foot-long fighter aircraft 'Sucker' wfp21' is a sculptural installation reflecting the liberation war against Pakistan who used aircraft getting economic benefit from East and it is painful truth of how the weapons purchased using taxpayers' money end up taking so many innocent lives and his community based performative photograph project 'Soaked Dream' families with green eyeglass on emerging, immigrant and refugee families are significant works.



## Saira Wasim

*My works are deeply committed to the tradition of Mughal miniature painting, few inches scale gives me a feeling of the theatrical stage where my characters gesticulate, prance, shoot and fly in flamboyant style.*

*I like to put contemporary world politics/unrest in a traditional miniature paintings format but in a subversive manner, juxtaposing the reality of our daily lives; as a drama or opera where actors are engaged in an epic struggle.*

*Most of my works are about my background and the transition 'in between' my old and new home Massachusetts. Most of my works depict how a marginalized person views the mainstream society in her own way.*



*Being a South Asian woman artist in the diaspora, I consider myself one of those few people who are trying to bridge the gap between east and west, unfortunately, which is widening every day.*

*My battle is not with the religious extremism in my home country (Pakistan) about also how western media define us.*

*I define my works as a humble plea for social injustice and cross-cultural misunderstandings, which we experience every now and then.*

*For the show, 'Not just another pretty picture', I am participating with five works, that I believe roar out in immense due to its content.*

*My art practice includes from boiling my own glue to preparing my own surface for the painting called 'Wasli paper', pigments are processed into fine gouache technique.*

*Most of my works are set in the style of 16th-century traditional Persian miniatures paintings, the intricate borders always beautifies or glorifies the painting, but here the traditional format and floral motives of the paintings are subverted to express my distress and dissent. The paintings might appeal aesthetically but disturb at the same time.*

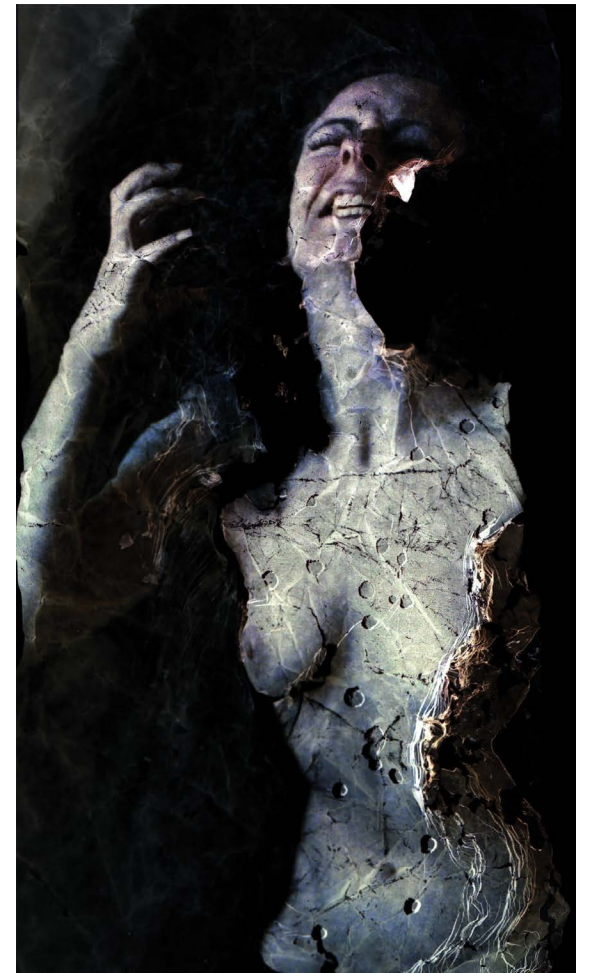
## Dan Wolf

*I have always enjoyed photos that are weird and make you wonder what you are looking at exactly. I like to make my photos look like places that cannot be seen with your own eyes and make places that do not seem to exist on Earth.*

*My photos are made by destroying the negative physically by scratching, burning, melting, sanding, crumpling and/or using water. By destroying the negative, I do not know what my exact results will look like. Everything I do becomes the opposite .*

*Many of my destructive methods lack control. For example, when I burn a negative, I do not know exactly when it is going to start melting or break apart. Water might wash away too much of the photo. By letting the process take over, I am giving up my control of the image.*

*I used to use a darkroom but more recently I have been using my scanner as my enlarger. I do manipulate the image in Photoshop but only slight color and contrast settings. The results are sometimes accidental but always unexpected. I print my photos large which changes the small scratches and holes into large gouges.*



## Arthur De Bow

Independent/freelance Curator  
Exhibitions Director/ Arts Administrator/ Artist Consultant/ Artist

I am the Cultural District Coordinator for the City of North Adams, MA. I'm the former curator at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Gallery 51 in downtown North Adams MA. and was formerly the Exhibitions Director/Curator and Director of Alumni Affairs at the Oregon College of Art and Craft in Portland Oregon for over 20 years, along with having been the Director of galleries in Portland and New York. I have conducted lectures and workshops around the county on the business side of the arts and the presentation of art. He was an Art and Design Major at Norjord University, Denmark and an Art and Theater Arts Major at Portland State University and also have a degree in Business and Travel Industry. My main work as an artist is in Fiber/Mixed Media and Book Arts/Prints and worked for a number of years as a costume designer in Portland and New York for off Broadway. I am on the Advisory Board of the Berkshire Art Museum, North Adams MA, the Co-Chair of the Cultural Council of Northern Berkshire and a member of the Fall Foliage Parade committee. In 2015 I received the Oregon Art Education Association's Higher Education Art Educator of the Year Award for the State of Oregon.

*Most of my work for a number of years has revolved around a body of work titled "Crow Exotica" which is a dream world where the main and superior inhabitants are crows. This dream world is a place I can integrate all the fascinating things that crows have represented and been a symbol for in different cultures for centuries and the relationship between them and the human world. A lot of the work draws references from ancient Egypt and Atlantis. Much of the work explores overlapping and intersecting layers of patterns and imagery, that at first can appear to random and decorative but has strong meaning and order. They are not merely decorative embellishments, but have a basis in reality and to some extent, establish location, purpose and a sense of place. This sense of place, ours and crows, is important to me; it anchors the work.*



## Sarah Sutro

*These dark paintings come from a series I did in the 1990's, where a balanced neutral range of dark colors was achieved through acrylic washes, impasto, oil, wax and selective, intuitive scraping. Meaningful anarchy and chaos describe a world in flux. Layers of overlapping build an overall pattern; sketchy landscape emerges and disappears, a sense of order is alluded to, then lost, creating a giant web of sense impression, or sound. Much of this comes out of nature, like the insistent drum of rain on a roof, the loud drill of cicadas in twilight in Asia, low cricket hum in a late summer field. Texture, percussion, individual notes combine to make a moving tapestry. Metamorphosis and change, organic form in motion, emerging and dissolving energies combine to suggest processes in nature, and also reflect changing times in politics and the world. Washes of paint move across the surface in repetitive motion almost like minimal music; textured grounds suggest movement. Graphically etched lines contrast with deep spaces. The work brings the viewer from space and abstract music, or to some minute texture, like the surface of a pebble or the bark of a tree.*

Work from this series was shown in Boston at the Rose Art Museum in the show "Drawing Between Metaphor and Matter," in New Haven at the Erector Square Gallery, and at Le Saffre Wilstein Gallery in Boston.

Sarah Sutro is an nationally and internationally shown artist who lives in North Adams. Her current work can be viewed at [www.sarahsutro.com](http://www.sarahsutro.com)





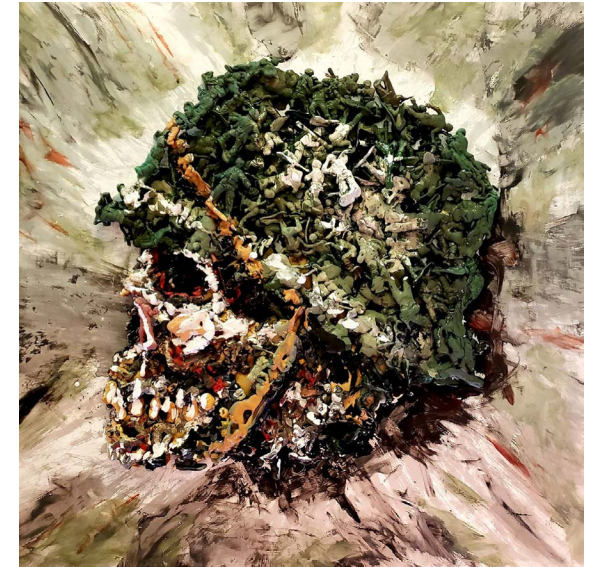
## David Zaig

born in Jerusalem, Israel  
Graduate of the Slade School of Fine Arts,  
University of London.  
Taught and exhibited in England and the US.

Films:

1. Homage to Magritte, 16 mm, 10 min. 1975
2. Works 1976/1986, 3 min.

Park and Museum, the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, the Milwaukee Art Museum and Galerie f5,6 in Munich. He has pieces in the permanent collection of numerous institutions that include the Museum of Contemporary Photography, the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art New York.



## Keith Bona

BFA Rochester Institute of Technology  
Graphic Design, CGI, Fine Arts/Illustration

Computer graphic and desktop design instructor  
at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts '93-2011

Owner Bona Marketing & Printing since 1991  
Marketing & Design Associate for  
Berkshire Music School

Invade #1 (profile)  
Invade #2 (frontal)  
Plastic, Steel, Acrylic, 24"x24"

The pair of Invade pieces will vary in meaning depending on who looks at them and how war and military have touched them.

*My take is what a soldier brings back after active duty, which includes people and experiences that effected them, and dark thoughts (real or imaginary) that invade their mind for the remainder of their lives. Each piece is made of hundreds of miniature plastic toy soldiers that have been distressed by heat and various techniques and partially painted over. The images change as you move closer to them just as one will see an individual differently as they learn more about them. If we could understand what is going on inside a soul, we would be more sympathetic to what we see on the exterior.*



## Maria Siskind

Maria Siskind is a sculptor working in painted media, an obsessive gardener, a caretaker of two dogs, beekeeper, and mushroom hunter who also enjoys facebook photography. She has a BFA in sculpture from Maine College of Art, and has studied at New York University. She lives in Williamstown, MA, and works as a generalist personal property appraiser.

**Red Monster Heads I, II, & III**, 2003, carved and painted cherry wood,  
**Cat Lover**, 2019, wild-crafted catnip (*Nepeta cataria*), and found objects.

**Garlic & Calendula**, In 2017 Siskind planted a “multi life” sculpture on the lawn of the Berkshire Artists Museum, titled . It was suppose to be a successive garden, of naturalized garlic (*Allium sativum*) and calendula (*Calendula officinalis*), hopefully perpetually repopulating itself by self seeding. In 2019 reviewing **Garlic & Calendula** life forth, the artist found many garlic plants, but only one calendula plant; plus plenty of uninvited weeds. Siskind plans on repopulating the calendulas. She welcomes the viewer to take home seeds produced in the late summer/fall to plant or freely scatter in their gardens so they can enjoy these visually attractive, tasty beneficial herbs, that are also great sources of pollen & nectar for pollinators to purposely aid these beneficial by sowing the seeds freely in your garden (or other disturbed ground in

their integrating their free spiritness into your garden designs.

Siskind has been gardening since she was a child (she started with houseplants purchased at Woolworth). She has been photographing her garden since 2010.

Siskind’s garden at the Berkshire Artists Museum is “multi life” sculpture, with the potential to reseed itself every year. Consisting of naturalized *Calendula officinalis* and semi wild crafted volunteers

### Calendula & Garlic

*All – I didn’t originally plant any of these plants, but I have created space for them to grow freely in my garden.*

*Using my camera with me, then my easel making an inventory of my labors, using as my subject their flowers, foliage and fruits. the changing seasons, I come across.*

*My non natives so bright and areomic garden art” concept Calundula I think these were originally Italian seed stock, a steady line volunteering in my garden since 200 flowers used in Allium the garlic beads purchased at Farmer Markets in Williamstown (from Petersburg NY), Cambridge NY, and at the Garlic festal in Bennington VT (various vendors), volunteering since 200 garlic*



## J.M. Robert Henriquez

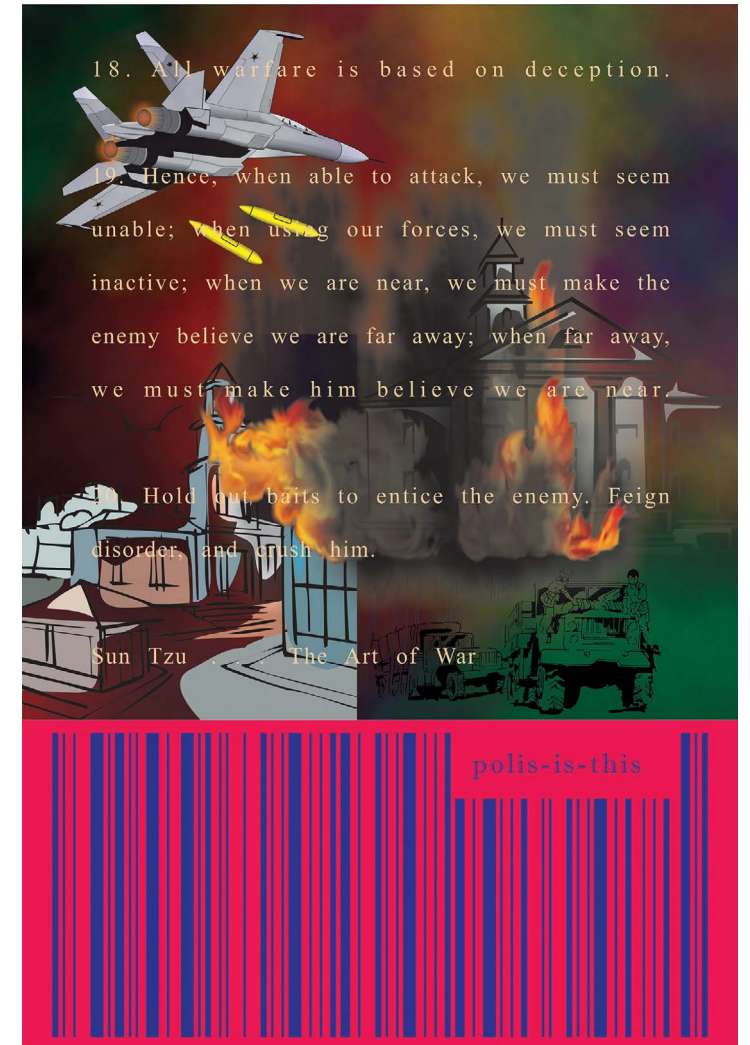
Polis-Is-This (A Warfare Metanarrative)

The artist notes for the “Dark Matter” show (2019)

*In the years following the end of the Contemporary Artists Center in 1999, I was looking for a new concept to make narrative or textual commentary an implicit part of the visual object. This new approach presfigured my concern with the difference between concept and mode of presentation. The endeavor is to closely bind the conceptual nature of the work with the nature of art and the nature of language (as encapsulated in the theory of art) to elevate the artwork to the level of a discourse on art itself.*

*The work Polis-Is-This (A Warfare Metanarrative) highlights the relationship between language, image and referent (meaning). In this early series of circa 2009 I used the construct of the Metanarrative as a totalizing artistic schema. It orders and explains other “smaller narratives” within a conceptual model that assemble the “smaller narratives” into a whole.*

*In this artwork I try to identify or equate these “smaller narratives” with the larger more encompassing story of warfare. They are the narratives of aggression, destruction and deception, and the philosophical challenges they bring to the idea of the “just war theory”.*



## Death of a Loved One - 1890s Fashion

### Collection of Greg Lafave

*Step into a picture and walk through this funeral scene. Experience what it would be like to step back in time to a very sad moment, many years ago, in the 1890's.*

*This installation lends itself to what the study of social/cultural anthropology is all about. How we, as human beings, relate to past and current events, and how we process the social and cultural standards and psychology of the time in which we live. How do those, who are left behind after the death of a loved one, deal with the love, loss, grief, friendship, compassion, and maybe even some feelings of guilt. Each figure has its own story.*

*Take a moment to think about and analyze each figure and try to imagine what they may be thinking and why. How will this event effect their lives going forward.*

*While the subject matter may seem a bit dark, art is meant to be entertaining. The clothing used in this exhibit are original pieces from the 1890's and would be appropriate as mourning attire in the 1890's.*

Greg Lafave 2019



## A Deeper, Darker Exhibit Debuts at Berkshire Art Museum

By Tammy Daniels / iBerkshires Staff

NORTH ADAMS, Mass. — The Berkshire Art Museum opens its sixth season by dipping into dark matter — art that's slightly twisted, disturbing, tortured, sorrowful, disastrous and, well, dark.

That's the theme running through "Not Just Another Pretty Picture," a group exhibit that opens on Thursday at 6 p.m. during the first DownStreet Art of the season.

"I like to do shows that I can relate to and also I feel that maybe are a little bit underrepresented in galleries," said museum founder Eric Rudd. "Gallery dealers will tell you what sells are pretty colorful things about this big that can go right over the couch."

The works of James Allen, Dan Wolf, Kevin Bubrski, Firoz Mahmud, Saira Wasim, Sandra Moore and Greg Lafave cover a variety of media from photography, stenciling, canvas and clothing. A second group, "Dark Matters," features works by the museum's advisory board members in the Tower Gallery: Keith Bona, Arthur De Bow, Robert Henriquez, Maria Siskind, Sarah Sutro and David Zaig.

It's the type of work that might not find an easy sale and, as Rudd's description cautions, "might not be for everyone who walks through our doors." But also, he points out, this type of darker art has been a part of our cultural landscape since the — portraying crucifixion, war, death, poverty, tragedy, violence to elicit a reaction from the viewer.

Allen, a Buffalo, N.Y., transplant who moved to Williamstown seven or eight years ago, is exhibiting his "tableaus" of painted canvases that evoke despair.

"I probably find it more internally necessary. It sounds pretty profound, but not that much," he said. "To deal with the things that I kind of don't understand, you need to get some sense of control over them more than the things that I love. ... Almost everything I do probably relates a lot to some kind of social or cultural problem."

His canvas cutouts came about with the help of his wife, a quilter, who was able to help him bring an idea to fruition. They stand out against the white walls in the museum's first floor pushing them more prominently within the space of the viewer.

"I like that it really occupies our space in a sense, as opposed to traditional frame stuff, where you enter the other world within that frame," Allen said. "I didn't know this when I started but I thought that when I started seeing how they reacted on that wall, I thought, wow, if they come into our space, right, yeah, space is just timeless."

The works on display have a sense of timelessness, they don't refer to a specific moment in time. In one, sickly looking women follow a man in black with a hidden face, in another, skeletal figures lead a starving man in a dance of death. The largest piece, "Nuns and Guns," is a tableau of nuns and armed soldiers of indeterminate nationality and period.

"There's a mystery about it, there's a need to say something to recognize it, too," Allen said. "And I think that my own feeling about what art can do. And there's all kinds of art, I understand that. It



all has its own purposes in the final. And I like lots of things that are nothing like mine. But I think art can help us come to grips with things that we have difficulty coming to grips with.”

On the second floor, Mahmud was hanging a large stenciled work portraying the death of Husayn ibn Ali at the Battle of Karbala. Husayn had faced off against a larger contingent and his forces were wiped out outside Baghdad in the 7th century. In the painting, he’s being cradled by his father under a golden beam while an angel hovers above and soldiers lurk in the corners.

Mahmud, a native of Bangladesh, said much of his work inspired by historical events, not surprisingly since he’s a student of history and his father and grandfather were historians and teachers. His family is originally from Iran and his grandfather traveled to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, while Mahmud has traveled on to Japan and now New York City.

“I traveled to many countries, my grandfather, father, we moved from one city to another,” he said. “We had a lot of history, migration history, we have regional history, which is connected to my art, my life, to our life. ...

“In general, I make paintings on our regional history — encompassing Bengal, Moghul history, Islamic history.”

He uses a stencil technique known as rendering, or “layapa.” He collects histories and artifacts or takes photos and then determines how it will be laid out. He uses a variety of tools to layer the paint. He also works in other media, including photography, and other of his works at BAM will be on victims who lost limbs. This is Mahmud’s second time in the city after

doing a residency at Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art last year.

“Yes, beautiful city. People are so nice, so friendly. And it’s the artistic environment,” he said. “It has Mass MoCA, the neighboring city has two good institutions Clark Art Institution and Williams College museum. The city has nice growing up artistic environment. So that like, yeah, I never been to a small city in the U.S. So this is my first city that I traveled and stayed. So that’s really inspired me to to be involved into it.”

“Not Just Another Pretty Picture” will have an opening reception from 6 to 9 p.m. with refreshments and appetizers by Meng’s Pan-Asian. Rudd thanked the museum’s donor who help keep the 24,000-square-foot facility open.

GALLERIES ON THREE LEVELS 2019 EXHIBITIONS

Not Just Another Pretty Picture

James Allen, Kevin Bubriski, Firoz Malmud, Sandra Moore, Saira Wasim, Dan Wolf

Death of a Loved One - 1890s Fashion

Collection of Greg Lafave

Dark Matter

Works by Advisory Board Members of the Berkshire Art Museum

SELECTIONS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

EARLY WORK OF ERIC RUDD 1966-1980

ICEBERG

Installation of Lexan Sculptures 1987-2011

ROBOTIC

“Walter’s Ontogen” 1999

BLUEPRINTS

Original Blueprints from the Former Methodist Church

MUSEUM ANNEX

(200 steps away at 82 Summer Street)

A CHAPEL FOR HUMANITY

Installation of 150 life-sized figures, 54 ceiling panels, 9/11 Garden

W.C. DRAWINGS

Figure Drawings



## Special Events sponsored by the Berkshire Art Museum

Six seasonal exhibition opening reception  
Flying Cloud Institute tour  
21st Annual Eagle Street Beach



# BERKSHIRE ART MUSEUM

Barbara and Eric Rudd Art Foundation

a 501c3 not-for-profit organization BAMuseum.org 413.664.9550



The Berkshire Art Museum's mission is to showcase engaging contemporary art through rotating exhibitions as well as to preserve and examine five decades of artwork by Eric Rudd in the museum's permanent collection. Rescuing two historic former churches, the Berkshire Art Museum exemplifies the adaptive reuse of architectural space for cultural purposes. By establishing and maintaining this unique art destination, the Berkshire Art Museum aims to contribute to the cultural economy of North Adams. Supported in part and under the umbrella of the Barbara and Eric Rudd Art Foundation, a 501c3 not-for-profit organization, as well as generous donors. All donations are tax deductible.

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## Office

189 Beaver Street  
North Adams, MA 01247

## Museum

159 East Main Street  
North Adams, MA 01247

## Annex

82 Summer Street  
North Adams, MA 01247